

SENATE SIMULATION

This Senate simulation will place students in the role of a senator. The main goal of this simulation is to pass various bills and get the President to sign them into law. The process in which a bill becomes a law is complex. Partisanship and clashing ideologies and egos do not make the process smooth. We will try to examine the most vital aspects of the process. This Senate Simulation will be divided into 6 parts:

1.) **Bill Writing Committee**- Each group will research and write a bill. The group will use the blank bill provided in the packet. The group must make the bill in the spirit of the topic. (e.g. a group should not make a Bailout Ban bill that allows for more assault weapons. If a member of the group does not support this stance, they can later act against it but for the sake of the bill writing committee every member should try to make the strongest bill possible. Here are the topics of the bills:

1. Immigration Reform 2. Gender Pay Disparity 3. Concealed Weapons Law 4. Child Care 5. Covid-19 Response 6. Infrastructure 7. Minimum Wage Increase 8. Sanctity of Human Life 9. Tariff Bill/Outsourcing 10. Climate Security Act Please download the sample bill format and instructions [Sample Bill and info](#) (# ____). In class students will meet and discuss the bill while they are working on a google doc and sharing it with the teacher as an editor.

2.) **PSA**- After the bill is written, interest groups weigh into the political process as proponents or opponents of the legislation and determine whether to push for its adoption or rejection. Each bill writing committee will develop a PSA **for or against** their bill to represent one of these interest groups. A PSA stands for Public Service Announcement. PSAs are generally detailed, informative, and delivered in a serious and formal manner. They are designed to tell a story effectively in 30 or 60 seconds, with a memorable tagline. Crafting a well-written PSA, making every choice count and creating a clever tag line is the focus of this challenge, regardless of your organizations interest in this project. This is a skill that all filmmakers can benefit from. Directors such as Spike Jonze, Tony Scott and Ridley Scott all started in short form narrative (i.e. commercials, music videos), and directly credit this early work as leading to their cross-over success. This proficiency is evident in their long form work as they get loads of information across in single shots or short screen times.

No PSA in this project will be accepted unless it is exactly 60 seconds long. The use of graphics is allowed to help you accomplish this goal. In addition, you must shoot new footage as opposed to creating a graphics based or animated PSA, or using existing footage. Here are three samples (note times were different back then): [Outsourcing](#), [Immigration Reform – Dream Act](#), [Muslim Ban](#).

3.) **Party Caucus**- The class will again be split into two parties- Republicans and Democrats. The Party Caucus is basically a meeting of the members in a particular party in which they discuss aspects of bills and choose leadership roles.

a.) Each member will be assigned a seniority number (which helps determine which committee and position you want to be), a state which they represent, and information about how the member's state stands on issues.

b.) After the bills have been completed, the parties will meet with their respective parties and pick their leaders. We will try to mimic the 116th Congress in which the Republicans control the Senate and thus have the majority leadership positions and the chairperson's roles. Democrats will need to pick their minority leader (conducts the business of the party and facilitates) and minority whip (makes sure all members of the party are following the party's dictates). Republicans will have to pick their majority leader and whip.

c.) The parties must also choose their 3 committee chairpersons (for Rep.) /ranking members (for Dems.) (one for each of the 3 different standing committees) . Committee chairpersons conduct the and lead the business of the standing committee with the help of the ranking member.

d.) The V.P. of the team which won the presidential election will serve as the president of the senate. If the V.P. is absent, the Democrats will choose a Senate Pro Tempore (this person will run the Senate debate.) The Pro Tempore is the oldest member from the majority party.

e.) Assign members to one of the standing committees (NOTE: members cannot serve on a standing committee that oversees the bill in which they wrote). Try to make the number of members on each committee equal. The Republicans will have to pick their minority leader and minority whip.

f.) Parties will then discuss the merits of each of the bills. Since the members will be part of the standing committees, the leadership and the members should try to determine which bills to support, which bills to try to pigeonhole, and/or which bills to amend. Have all members take notes as the discussion takes place. It may also be necessary to vote on what action the members should take.

g.) Non Party Caucuses: This year we will emulate the [Congressional Women's Caucus](#) and the [Freedom Caucus](#) too. (all boys will be in the Freedom caucus regardless of party).

4.) **Standing Committee Hearings**

Standing committees are the primary vehicle by which a bill is amended or reaches the floor for debate. Each committee should consider two bills, but will temporarily pigeonhole one bill shortly into the debate at the committees' discretion. The teacher will initiate a deadline for each stage of the committee process in which the committee chairperson must rigorously adhere to.

a.) Standing committees hold hearings on the bill after its creation to evaluate the bill's merits and possible consequences. The committee should devise questions that are deemed pertinent in understanding the issues that the bill presents. Each member should participate in the question writing and should record the questions. Each member of the committee except the bill's sponsor should play a role of not only a senator, but also a witness representing an interest group and its feelings on the bill. The witness should be present at the hearings on the date and time designated by the senate committee. Committee members will sit in a horseshoe fashion facing the witnesses as they speak. The committee chairperson will lead the meeting using a gavel to maintain order. He or she will then introduce each committee member, the bill under consideration, and maintain order and welcome the witnesses as they arrive. The first witness will air the PSA and then make a speech and the members may ask questions afterwards. After the first witness succeeding witnesses will only give the speeches. At the invitation of the chairperson, the witness should

- 1.) Give their name, title, group represented, (make it up if you need to seem more credible)
- 2.) Make a speech about the **topic** of the bill (all must write out a Typed 1.5-2 page speech) based on research. Make sure to include statistics, quotations, graphics, or other supporting evidence as part of their testimony. Be prepared to answer questions on your bill and take notes on each topic. Take notes
- 3.) Witnesses will then be asked questions about the topic of the bill and should include a visual aid such as a picture, graphs, statistics, quotations, graphics, or other supporting evidence as part of their testimony.
- 4.) Upon finishing the presentation and answering questions, the witness should return to the committee and resume (change hats) their role as Senator.

5.) **Standing Committee Mark-ups**

After all of the witnesses testify, the committee then should consider to mark-up the bill (minor changes). The spirit of the original bill must be kept intact. A final draft of the bill will be due after this session.

6.) **Senate Floor Debate**- Bills that survived the Committee hearing process and have been marked-up will be introduced to the floor. A Senate member must make a motion to introduce a bill. The Chairperson that worked with the bill will then come up to the front and make a recommendation (either in the positive or the negative) to the Senate. The bill will be read and then debated. Amendments may be made to the bill. A motion to vote (move the previous question- "voting to vote") can be made and a majority vote is needed to pass the bill.

The President's Role: The president will initially select the bill topic that he or she feels most important to the administration and pretend to be a member of congress working on that bill and PSA. As the party caucuses and standing committees are meeting the president will “flit” around from caucus/committee to committee to determining the major features of each bill. S/he will then write speeches in press conferences that will enlighten the Senate of his/her stances on the bills. S/he can also make recommendations to amend, pigeonhole, or pass the bills. Since the president has leverage via the veto, his/her comments should not be ignored. The president should meet with his/her party’s leaders to discuss the bills. Finally, the president will sign or veto laws passed by the Senate after the senate debates the bills. If the president vetoes a bill, a reason should be given. Remember, the Senate can override a veto.

Media: May be included in the second half of the simulation at the teacher’s discretion.

Grade: Please see Senate Simulation Grading Guidelines

SENATE SIMULATION EXPERT TESTIMONY PAPER & VISUAL REQUIREMENTS

Background: Testimony from expert witnesses are crucial in helping Congressional committees to understand the broad issues that revolve around any particular bill. Experts who testify allow for different information and perspectives on bills that senators who are usually not as versed in a specific area. In a nutshell, the purpose of the testimony is to help educate senators who then can make a better bill.

To Do: Write a 1.5-2 page typed paper based on research (closed research sources). Follow the Scholarly writing Guidelines with the exception that since you will be portraying an expert in the field, you may use the first person “I” in your paper.

As an expert, you are to:

1. Assume and act like you’re an expert in the field . You should assume a name, background (including educational history), title (i.e.- Phd., M.D., etc)
2. Write a 1.5-2 page essay that supports the side you were assigned.
3. Follow the structure outlined in the Scholarly Writing Guide:
 - a. Introduction Paragraph should include:
 - i. Thesis statement
 - ii. Context
 - iii. Points of discussion
 - b. Body Paragraphs
 - i. Points of discussion topics are clearly stated and then supported
 - c. Conclusion
 - i. Summarize points and highlight key ideas
 - ii. Emphasis on what should be done – what do you want the Senators to do?
 - d. Include relevant statistics, graphs and information

SENATE SIMULATION EXPERT PAPER RUBRIC

CATEGORY	Excellent	Meets	Below	Poor
Thesis	Thesis is clearly stated in opening paragraph. Thesis is well thought out, logical, and realistic.	Thesis is clearly stated but is not clearly written or not realistic.	Thesis is poorly written and is not clear.	Thesis is very poorly written or missing
Quality of Information (this category is worth double)	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and textual examples that support the thesis.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides 1-2 supporting details and textual examples that support the thesis.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
Organization	Information is very organized with well-constructed paragraphs and subheadings/points of discussion. Concluding paragraph has clear guidance for action for the Senators. Paper is at least 2 pages in length. Personal background is stated.	Information is organized with well-constructed paragraphs. Points of discussion evident. There is a guidance for action for the Senators. Paper is 2 pages in length. Personal background is stated.	Information is organized, but paragraphs are not well-constructed. Missing important points of discussion. No guidance for action is evident in the conclusion. Paper is less than 2 pages. Personal background is thin or absent.	The information appears to be disorganized. No guidance for action in the concluding paragraph. Paper is less than 2 pages in length. Personal background is sparse or missing.
Paragraph Construction	All paragraphs include introductory sentence, explanations or details, and concluding sentence.	Most paragraphs include topic sentence or details, and concluding sentence.	Paragraphs include related information but were typically not constructed well.	Paragraph structure was unclear and sentences were not typically related within the paragraphs.
Mechanics	No grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors.	Almost no grammatical, spelling or punctuation errors	Some grammar spelling, or punctuation errors.	Many grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.
Sources	At least 3 different sources used. All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented	At least 3 sources used. All sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented, but a few are not accurately done	Less than 3 sources (information and graphics) are accurately documented and form is barely adequate.	Less than 3 sources used. Some sources are not accurately documented.